



Between Matrimony and Sisterhood: Gendered Identity Formation in Contemporary Indian Diasporic Women's Fiction

Nitika Wadhwa¹, Dr. Apoorva Hooda²

¹Ph.D. Scholar, Department of English, K.R. Mangalam University, Gurugram, Haryana, India

²Assistant Professor (Senior Scale), Centre for Language Learning, The NorthCap University, Gurugram, India

Received: 09 Feb 2026; Received in revised form: 10 Mar 2026; Accepted: 14 Mar 2026; Available online: 17 Mar 2026

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Abstract— *The diasporic Indian women's fiction is a critical reflection of the gendered fact in the diaspora as dictated by the migration, cultural memory, and social expectations. This paper will discuss how marriage and sisterhood have helped in shaping the diasporic identity in For Matrimonial Purposes by Kavita Daswani and in Sister of My Heart by Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni. Although Daswani introduces marriage as a culturally controlled organization that organizes the lives of women in immigrant communities, Divakaruni foreshadows sisterhood and emotional connections as other places of self-determination and strength. The paper utilizes the diaspora theory and feminist criticism in the argument that even though diasporic identity is formed by displacement, it is equally formed by emotional negotiation and relations. For Matrimonial Purposes shows the strains of cultural harmony and parental domination, and marriage is shown to be a place of constraint and a place of stealthy subversion. Contrary to that, Sister of My Heart stresses women's unity, which can help women to redefine identity outside the expectations imposed by society. Collectively, the novels show that marriage and sisterhood are parallel but opposing structures upon which diasporic women are building identity. The paper comes to a conclusion that modern Indian women's fiction is a reflection of the diasporic social realities that show the active participation of women in reconstructing identity in the culturally hybrid space.*



Keywords— *Diaspora, Marriage, Sisterhood, Displacement, Cultural memory.*

I. INTRODUCTION

Diasporic writing by Indian women takes up an influential place in modern postcolonial and feminist literary and cultural studies because it predicts the gendered aspects of the migration, displacement, and identity construction processes (Brah; Mishra). This literature is based on traditions of colonialism and postcolonial movement and is an account of the experiences of women who find themselves in different, overlapping cultural spaces at the same time. As compared to the previous works of diasporic narratives where the primary theme was the feeling of nostalgia about the homeland, the current Indian women writers discuss the daily negotiations through which women are recreating their identities in the transnational territory.

Their fiction portrays how migration transforms not only family roles, culture, and dreams but also aspirations, especially of women who are mostly portrayed as the guardians of tradition. This makes the diasporic fiction of Indian women one of the key places where the intersection of gender, culture, and identity can be studied within the context of the lived experiences of displacement. Diaspora is becoming more and more conceptualized not only as physical mobility but also as an active space of cultural exchange and emotional adjustment (Hall; Brah). To the Indian female, a diaspora may mean living in an in-between place between the cultural values inherited and the host country's socio-cultural norms. This intermediate zone establishes conflicts between continuity and change, belonging and alienation, tradition and modernity. These

tensions are very acute among women since their identities are highly controlled by the family systems, social norms, and cultural beliefs. An Indian diaspora literature will convey these negotiations, a woman struggling to balance the demands of an individual and the community is one of them. Indian women writers, in their narratives in which they emphasize domestic space, interpersonal interaction, and emotional conflict, present diaspora as a process that brings change, but is difficult, and changes how women perceive themselves. In this literary tradition, marriage is one of the narrative techniques exhibited repeatedly to strengthen and disrupt the cultural standards. Marriage in the diasporic setting can be considered as one way of preserving ethnic integrity and continuity of culture in migrant groups (Yuval-Davis; Mishra). In women, it ends up being a place where individual agency is often submissive to both family and social norms. The arranged marriages, gender roles, and romanticizing of the traditional woman are usually heightened in the diaspora as a reaction to the perceived cultural loss. As a result, marriage in literary works exposes the way women bargain with the patriarchal patterns in the process of trying to gain independence and establish their identity. Marriage is, therefore, not only a social institution, but it is a strong metaphor of a cultural negotiation of diasporic narratives. In addition to marriage, sisterhood and bonding among women are also important factors in the development of the diasporic experiences of women. Sisterhood, be it in blood ties or by emotional bonding, provides women with an emotional sanctuary and support that offsets the limitations of patriarchal structures. Female relationships in the diasporic fiction tend to cross the geographical boundaries and social hierarchies, also giving continuity in the face of displacement. Through these bonds, women are able to share a loss, desire, and adaptation experience, which they can negotiate identity as a group and not have to do it individually. Sisterhood, as a narrative technique, predicts emotional attachment and mutual support, and focuses more on other types of belonging that disrupt dominant cultural frameworks. Marriage and sisterhood are diametrically opposite and inseparable forces that influence reactions of women towards diaspora. The thematic issues are well represented in *For Matrimonial Purposes* by Kavita Daswani and *Sister of My Heart* by Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, who have also taken different approaches to the issues related to the identity of Indian women in the diaspora. The novel written by Daswani is devoted to the stress of arranged marriage through the immigrant populations of Indian communities in the United States, where marriage is depicted as a culturally controlled institution ruling the lives of women. Daswani criticizes the commodification of marriage through a mixture of realism and humor and is also critical

of the generation clash between tradition and choice. The novel reveals the way women find their way around cultural pressures in their bid to gain independence, and marriage is one of the key prismatic lenses that are used to study diasporic negotiation. Conversely, the *sister of My Heart* by Divakaruni anticipates sisterhood as a supportive emotional power that defines the identity of women across transnational boundaries. The novel follows the friendship of two women whose lives are not geographically united, but still have an emotional connection. Although there is marriage in the story by Divakaruni, it is the sisterhood that ultimately helps the characters to survive displacement, marriage rules, and cultural turmoil. The focus on emotional memory and feminine bonding, and transnational affiliation by Divakaruni provides another model of conceptualizing the sense of diasporic identity, but based, instead, on relational and emotional continuities and not the structures. The choice of Daswani and Divakaruni for this research is explained by their common work with the experiences of Indian women in the diaspora and their focus on marriage and sisterhood in the narratives, rather differently. Both authors are representatives of the Indian diaspora in the present day and discuss the issues of gender and migration in the delicate female-focused stories. Their novels offer a supplementary approach to how women negotiate cultural identity, and thus, they are the best texts to be used in a comparative analysis. Through the analysis of the works in question, the paper brings out the role of institutional power, like marriage, and relational power, like sisterhood, to concurrently influence the diasporic subjectivity. Although the role of the Indian diasporic literature in the development of the Indian women's identity has been studied extensively, little focus has been made on the interplay between marriage and sisterhood in women's identity construction. The available literature tends to examine these themes independently of each other without considering the interaction between them in the diasporic setting. The paper aims to fill this gap by exploring the way marriage and sisterhood are used as either complementary or contradicting powers in the lives of women. The main aim of the research is to examine how these storytelling techniques help in the construction of the diasporic identity in *For Matrimonial Purposes* and *Sister of My Heart*. It attempts to examine marriage as a location of cultural control and sisterhood, as a location of emotional stability, as well as emphasizing the agency of negotiating space by women, transnationalism. The main argument of the paper is that, whereas marriage in diasporic narratives usually supports traditional configurations, the concept of sisterhood turns out to be a new power that helps women to reconsider a sense of identity and belonging to a diaspora.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Critical Indian diaspora literature studies have evolved into a multidisciplinary area of study that interacts with postcolonial theory, cultural studies, and feminist criticism to reflect on the multidimensional migration, displacement, and identity construction. The initial research was mostly centered around the exile, nostalgia, and cultural loss themes, where the diasporic subject is described as being in between a homeland memory and host land alienation (Rushdie; Hall). With time, the critics changed to perceive diaspora as a shifting place of cultural negotiation that is filled with hybridity, liminality, and transnational belonging. The literature of Indian diasporas has been studied due to the subtle nature of the characters balancing between tradition and modernity, bringing out a continuous redefinition of cultural identity across boundaries. The scholars have stressed that diasporic writing is not a passive reflection of displacement but a dynamic process that is involved in the processes of identity reconstruction under the influence of social, cultural, and emotional factors. According to feminist scholars, the emerging use of patriarchal arrangements that control the role of women in the family and community determines the diasporic experiences of women and increases the pressures on cultural maintenance in the migrant situations. Research points to the way women are placed as custodians of tradition, as the ones who preserve cultural values by means of marriage, housework, and childbirth. Simultaneously, the feminist criticism focuses on the agency of women and explains how female characters are resistant, bargain, and reconsider these requirements. This view overturns the features of passivity as the victims of diasporic women to the aspects of active participation in defining their identities in the realm of transnational space. Both diaspora and feminist literary criticism have been focused on marriage, which is discussed as one of the strongest cultural institutions structuring social relations and setting up gender hierarchies. Marriage in the diaspora literature has been examined by scholars as an aspect of the preservation of ethnicity and boundaries of communities, especially in the practices of arranged marriage. Feminist criticisms accentuate the way the institution of marriage tends to limit the autonomy of the woman as it establishes the conventional gender roles and demands of submission and sacrifice. Nonetheless, the current academic research also acknowledges marriage as a disputed and ambiguous area wherein women bargain power, identity, and belonging. Literary descriptions demonstrate the way in which marriage relationships within diasporic settings are manifested through underlying conflicts between the continuity of culture and individual wishes, and, as such, marriage emerges as a central area in matters of identity.

Over the past few years, feminist critics have been drawn to female bonding and sisterhood as an increasingly important form of narration in diasporic writing by women. The literature of sisterhood focuses on the importance of emotional and relational networks as a means of maintaining women in migration and cultural dislocation. The female community is seen as an alternative zone of belonging, providing emotional, supportive, and strong forces outside the institutions of patriarchy. The opponents say that sisterhood helps women to share cultural memory, express suppressed emotions, and negotiate identity as a collective. Marriage and female bonding are, nevertheless, two distinct thematic issues that are frequently handled in the scholarship. This discontinuous method emphasizes the importance of integrated studies where the institutional frameworks, like marriage, are considered in relation to the relationship between people, the interaction of interpersonal female relationships in the formation of diasporic identity, and thus new lines of critical discussion of contemporary Indian women's fiction.

III. RESEARCH GAPS

Although the literature on the topic of Indian diasporic literature and women writing has been growing, there are still many gaps in the literature that require the researcher to fill in terms of knowledge relating to the development of gendered identity through the complex interplay of social and emotional frameworks (Mishra). Among the gaps, one can single out the insufficient comparative emphasis on marriage and sisterhood as the two interrelated narrative forces in the texts of diasporas. The literature has mostly focused on marriage as an institution, which makes the patriarchal systems and cultural continuity stronger, with a focus on the limited agency of women in the family and society. On the other hand, the studies of sisterhood and female bonding have inclined to bring out the thematic issues of emotional solidarity, resistance, and empowerment as independent research. The treatment of these dimensions in isolation by the current scholarship deprives it of the means through which the forces of institutions and relations interact to create the experience of the diaspora in women. Subsequently, the delicate balancing act between duty and emotional attachment that defines the life of women in the diaspora is not yet well examined. The other gap that is critical is the role of interpersonal relationships between women that has not been investigated in the development of diasporic identity. Although the process of identity formation in the diaspora literature has received extensive treatment in terms of wider social-political contexts like hybridity, assimilation, and cultural conflict, little has been done to understand the daily emotional stakes in which the

identity is lived and negotiated. Women's relations, especially relationships with sisters, friends, and surrogate kinship, are considered the pivotal points where women express their desires, obtain cultural memory, and bargain displacement. These relational spaces are, however, often sidelined in critical discourse, which tends to prioritize and give more importance to public experiences of migration than the personal or affective aspects. This neglect leads to the partial realization of the process of maintaining and transforming diasporic identity in the form of emotional and relational networks (Grewal and Kaplan). Moreover, there are limited comparative studies with the aim of uniting various narrative strategies that are used by contemporary Indian women writers. Insofar as the current body of work does not cover too many authors or even single strands of a theme, it tends to limit the general understanding of how various manifestations of marriage and sisterhood are conducted across texts. A more subtle approach to understanding the experiences of gendered diaspora, however, is a comparative approach that considers the simultaneous operation of these themes. In the absence of these comparative frameworks, critical readings will simplify women's response to migration to either be bound by tradition or have freedom of resistance without considering the negotiated and fluidity of identity construction. Lack of unified analyses, which encompass marriage and interpersonal relationships of females, also restricts feminist interpretations of diasporic literature. The agency and resistance have been highlighted by feminist scholars, but the relations of agency exercise are under-theorized. The claims of women in negotiating identity are usually not only made against the patriarchal institutions but also through supportive relations with fellow women. The acknowledgment of this intersectionality is a key to the realization of the entire range of diasporic experiences of women. The need to fill in these research gaps is thus essential to further scholarship on the Indian women diaspora fiction as it allows making a comprehensive analysis of the overall role of the institutional structure and emotional relationships in the construction of the diasporic identity.

IV. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This theoretical framework of the study relies largely on the feminist theory and the theory of the diaspora to explore the gender construction of identity among contemporary Indian women in diaspora fiction (Chakravarty; Brah). The feminist theory is a critiquing theory that looks at gender, agency, and patriarchy in the domestic and social arena. According to the feminist approach, the identities of women are informed by the power relations entrenched in cultural

institutions like marriage and family, which in most cases serve the purpose of controlling the actions of women and restricting autonomy. Feminist criticism anticipates that women will negotiate these findings by means of resistance, accommodation, and self-assertion, and agency places emphasis on the restrictive structures. When providing the study of the lived experience of women, the feminist theory allows one to see how the female characters question the patriarchal traditions and still have to deal with expectations regarding the tradition, culture, and gender roles. The Diaspora theory is an extension of this practice, as it puts women's experiences in a transnational context that involves migration and displacement (Brah; Mishra). The key concepts of the diaspora theory include notions of hybridity, cultural memory, and transnational identity that emphasize the changeable and fluid identity across national boundaries. The term Hybridity is associated with the fusion of cultural practices and values, which appears when people live in more than one cultural space, and the term cultural memory is used to underline the importance of the persistence of the traditions of the motherland and historical memory on the diasporic subjects. The transnational identity describes how migrants have emotional, cultural, and social ties across national borders. It is possible to appreciate diaspora not only as a state of loss or displacement, but as a negotiating place where identities are still being constructed in these concepts. The idea of negotiated identity is an important bridge between the feminist and diaspora theories in this work. Negotiated identity acknowledges that the selfhood of women is not static or purely defined by the cultural formations, but it is formed in the course of constant interplay between social demands, subjective wills, and situational relationships. Diasporic women are negotiating identity at the border between patriarchal tradition and new cultural possibilities, and they are frequently finding a trade-off between continuity and transformation. The process is specifically evident in the reaction of women, regarding marriage and relationships, where these are the central areas where the process of negotiation happens. The model, therefore, focuses on identity as a process but not a fixed category. Close to negotiated identity, a concept that is highly related to it is that of liminality, which is a condition of in-betweenness that is experienced by individuals who exist between cultural, social, or emotional worlds. Women living in diaspora are usually placed in transitional locations, in between the mother country and the new land, tradition and modernity, duty and freedom. Liminality makes possible not only uncertainty but also transformation because women can defy strict cultural rules and seek other options of belonging. In this perspective, displacement of women is seen as a redefinition opportunity; however, it is

associated with emotional and cultural tension. Feminist theory, diaspora theory, and the notions of negotiated identity and liminality can be used jointly to analyze *For Matrimonial Purposes* and *Sister of My Heart* since they offer the means of exploring the experience of women as they negotiate institutional and relational frameworks (marriage and sisterhood). These theoretical approaches make it possible to have a subtle interpretation of how the gendered relations of power and the transnational movement collide to form the identity of the diaspora. The merger of these frameworks will be used to provide a complex viewpoint of how the contemporary Indian female fiction portrays identity formation as a process of negotiation, resistance, and emotional attachment in diasporic surroundings.

V. METHODOLOGY

This paper will follow the qualitative research approach based on a textual analysis and comparison of literature to explore how marriage, female relations, and identity formation have been described in modern Indian diasporic literature written by women. Textual analysis, in particular, a qualitative one, is best adapted to the given research as this method makes it possible to analyze narrative structures, character development, thematic patterns, and symbolic elements of the chosen texts closely. Instead of quantitative measures, the work focuses on the depth of the interpretation in order to discern the ways in which cultural senses and gendered experiences are expressed through language, plot, and the dynamics between people. The comparative approach also enhances the analysis by bringing together the two main texts in a conversation so that one can establish the similarities and differences of the thematic issues in the narrative and the narrative techniques used. The choice of *For Matrimonial Purposes* by Kavita Daswani and *Sister of My Heart* by Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni is informed by their main focus on the diasporic experiences of the Indian women and their unique approach to the issue of marriage and female relationships. Both novels belong to the novels written by modern Indian women authors who are located in the framework of the diaspora, but provide different narratives. *For Matrimonial Purposes* prefigures the marriage as an institution that is culturally controlled in the immigrant populations through realism and humor to challenge the original norms. By contrast, *Sister of My Heart* is more concerned with sisterhood and emotional connections going beyond national borders, pointing to the relational identity within the transnational frame. The more subtle exploitation of the role of institutional and relational forces in defining women's identities in the context of diaspora can be

achieved through the comparative choice of the texts. The analysis is organized in terms of particular parameters of analysis that will lead to the reading of both texts. The former parameter is concerned with the aspects of marriage, in which the roles of marriage expectations, marriage arrangements, and gender roles are addressed in diasporic societies. The second parameter explores the relationships of females and their sisterhood and emotional connection as other areas of support and identity. The focus is given to the role of interpersonal relationships in women in resisting, being emotionally resilient, and continuing to exist despite displacement. The third parameter deals with the conflict of cultures and identity changes and looks at instances where the characters face a conflict between the values of the homeland and the norms of the host country. These are the analyses of the experience of displacement, generational clash, and negotiation of hybrid identities.

Marriage and Diasporic Negotiation in *For Matrimonial Purposes*

In *For Matrimonial Purposes*, Kavita Daswani introduces marriage as a primary way of keeping cultural values alive, negotiating, and disputing them in Indian diasporas (Daswani). The novel is set mostly in the lives of Indian immigrant societies in the United States, and the issue of marriage is presented as a mechanism of cultural control, which governs the women and their decisions, behavior, and identity. Arranged marriage serves as a tool of affirming the traditional norms, especially in a diasporic setting where cultural continuity is viewed as being weak. Women characters have to follow the prescribed roles and stick to them, with the main emphasis on family honor, obedience, and cultural authenticity, and usually, without any emphasis on personal desires. With these depictions, Daswani reveals how marriage is used as a means of preserving patriarchal power in the migrant families and makes women bearers of the cultural responsibilities. Families consider marriage as a tool of gaining economic, social status, and cultural legitimacy in the host society. The focus on appropriate matches, in terms of education, profession, caste, and immigration status, may be seen as a sign of the transactional character of marriage negotiations. This process commonly commodifies the bodies and future of women and turns marriage into an exchange of interests that will benefit the masses, and not individual fulfillment. The account given by Daswani emphasizes the ways of reproducing the hierarchical systems even in transnational spaces through such practices that prove that migration may not necessarily destroy the traditional power relations but can, instead, aggravate them. Marriage too becomes one of the central areas of disagreement between tradition and individuality in *For Matrimonial Purposes*. Women characters are subject to inner and outer conflicts in a bid to

balance personal interests and family demands. These wars are indicative of larger conflicts being experienced by the diasporic women in that they are torn between what the homeland expects and what the culture of the host offers in terms of freedom. By creating instances of resistance, indecision, and self-reflection, Daswani creates a woman who is an active negotiator of her identity and not a passive conformist to cultural pressures. Marriage, therefore, turns into a venue where women face the boundaries that are put on their independence and seek ways of identifying themselves. The application of humor and irony as narrative elements is one of the peculiarities of the way Daswani treats the question of marriage. Using wit and satire, Daswani condemns the absurdity and contradictions of the matrimonial system without indulging in moralizing. Humor enables the novel to be both revealing of the adherence to traditional practices and a narrative approachable and emotionally rich. This ironic emphasis highlights the contrast between idealist concepts of marriage and the facts on the ground of women who have to struggle with these ideals in the diaspora. In the comic, Daswani shakes the power of the patriarchal norms and calls to think critically about the cultural traditions of marriage. The influence of arranged marriage on female autonomy and identity constitutes a very important part of the ways in which the novel explores the problem of diasporic negotiation. Although arranged marriage constrains the freedoms of women as it puts more emphasis on social conformity rather than choice, it also emerges as a situation that allows women to define their agency. Women characters react to these restrictions differently, either by conforming, bargaining, or slightly revolting, which displays identity as an adjustable and changing process. The diasporic identity of women as portrayed by Daswani focuses more on the fact that it is not only the external pressures that shape the identity of women, but also their response to the institutional structures. Finally, *For Matrimonial Purposes* introduces the idea of marriage as a complicated and disputable area of pre-emption of the cultural control, social mobility, and self-identity, and the subtle manner in which diasporic women can negotiate tradition and selfhood.

Sisterhood and Emotional Survival in *Sister of My Heart*

In *the sister of my heart*, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni preempts sisterhood as a driving emotion and plot element that maintains sisterhood amid dislocation, estrangement, and personal disillusionment. Sisterhood in the novel is introduced as a relation that goes beyond biological relatedness, and the focus of the connection is on emotional intimacy, shared memory, and understanding each other as elements of female connection. The friendship between Anju and Sudha has built up a very interdependent

relationship, which makes them identify with their childhood into adulthood. This relationship crosses the traditional roles of the family and is a zone of trust and emotional safety amid a patriarchal ordered world. Divakaruni questions these dominant discourses, which mainly define women in terms of marriage and relationships with men, by putting the choice of sisterhood first. The female bonding in the novel is made a source of emotional strength that helps the main actors to overcome personal and cultural shocks. Since the characters face marital restrictions, reproductive trauma, and emotional alienation, their relationship with each other provides relief and power. Sisterhood serves as a feeling of semen, and the women are able to express their fears, desires, and frustrations, which are not being spoken out in patriarchal household environments. The narrative by Divakaruni highlights the therapeutic aspect of women's relationships and makes them crucial to the survival of their psyche in both homeland and diasporic settings. The bonding of the emotional experiences shared by the protagonists leads to the development of a stronger sense of self, which is not weakened by the dependency of the relationships. The transnational separation is one of the themes that are essential in the development of the concept of sisterhood in the novel. Physical distance that is created due to migration does not break the emotional attachment between Anju and Sudha, but rather it transforms the kind of relationship that they share. Their sisterhood continues to exist, even beyond national borders, and it is maintained with the help of memory, communication, and emotional imagination. This narrative of continuity underscores the fact that the identity of the diaspora is not necessarily the one that is entrenched in the aspect of geographical closeness but is upheld by the bonds that cut across borders in an affective manner. Divakaruni, therefore, introduces the theme of sisterhood as a transnational relationship that cannot be affected by the dislocating forces of migration and through which women can still have a sense of continuity and belonging even after they have been displaced. The concept of sisterhood in *Sister of My Heart* is also an alternative to the dependence on one partner, as it presents women with a system of relationships that is not dependent on the authority of a partner or marriage legitimization. Although marriage is also a feature that is of significance to the lives of the characters, it is, in most cases, portrayed as a place of limitation, as opposed to satisfaction. Conversely, the friendship between the women gives emotional equality, respect, and agency to each other. This new form of connection gives the protagonists the chance to build a new definition of strength and independence as not being isolated, but a power of relationship. The description provided by Divakaruni does not support classic hierarchies

in that emotional satisfaction and identity formation in women do not have to depend on patriarchal institutions. By portraying sisterhood as the survival of emotion, Divakaruni reevaluates diasporic identity as relational and not just institutional. The novel stresses that women's identity is constructed with interpersonal relationships providing support, continuity, and opposition to cultural restrictions. Sisterhood is revealed as a trans-formative power that helps women to manage the displacement, negotiate the cultural clash, and exercise their emotional agency. By doing so, *Sister of My Heart* makes female bonding a strong counter-narrative to such a dependency on the male, making it the key to the formation and maintenance of women's diasporic identities.

Comparative Analysis: Marriage vs. Sisterhood

Marriage and sisterhood are the two opposing and at the same time interrelated elements that define the identity of women in the situation of cultural displacement in the Indian women's diasporic fiction in modern times. In *For Matrimonial Purposes*, by Kavita Daswani, marriage serves as one of the most influential institutional structures in which the diasporic communities aim to ensure cultural continuity, control the behavior of women, and enforce the conventional gender roles. The identity of the main character is bargained in strict demands of arranged marriage, respectability, and cultural adaptation, showing the marriage to be the place of surveillance and restriction in the immigrant case. Daswani reveals the emotional tension created when individual ambitions are confronted with social rules by revealing marriage as a romantic relationship more than a social-cultural process that trains women into desirable diasporic subjects. On the contrary, *Sister of My Heart* by Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni predicts sisterhood as an emotional and cultural home where women can withstand the pressures of patriarchy and transnational divides. Anju and Sudha share a very strong emotional connection that is not based on biological ties and geography but provides emotional nourishment, shared memory, and cultural continuity in times of crisis. Unlike marriage, which tends to disintegrate identity through the introduction of established roles, sisterhood provides fluidity in self-expression and empowerment of each other, thereby affording the protagonists to bargain with modernity without completely cutting off the links to tradition. Although marriage is accepted as one of the most important symbols of womanhood in both novels, Divakaruni questions its primacy by placing female bonding as a different site of belonging and strength. The point of convergence between Daswani and Divakaruni is that they both acknowledge the gender fluidity of the diasporic identity formation, but Daswani focuses more on the narrative of the institution of marriage to emphasize its

limiting effects on autonomy, whilst Divakaruni places it on the theme of sisterhood to explore its transformative power in order to define the self. Put collectively, these accounts indicate that the phenomenon of diasporic identity is not created by a single social system but rather is the result of the complicated interaction between institutional necessity and affective solidarity.

VI. CONCLUSION

This paper has made the case that marriage and sisterhood are mutually supporting but opposing structures in the construction of diasporic identity in modern Indian women's fiction, as evidenced by using the works of *For Matrimonial Purposes* by Kavita Daswani and *Sister of My Heart* by Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni. The paper illustrates how the identity of women in the diaspora is formed as a result of negotiating between tradition, modernity, and agency by analyzing marriage as an institutional force and sisterhood as an affective and cultural refuge. The story by Daswani reveals the issue of marriage as a tool of cultural preservation that tends to limit the autonomy of women and enforce patriarchal demands on the immigrant population, and shows the emotional and psychological cost of achieving gender roles (Daswani). Divakaruni, on the contrary, prefigures female bonding and sisterhood as maintaining forces, which provide emotional stability, cultural memory continuity, and other forms of belonging than marital identity (Divakaruni). Combined, these writings emphasize the gendering of the experience of diasporas and also emphasize how women adapt to displacement by managing institutionalized demands and forming interpersonal solidarities. The paper adds to the research of the Indian women diaspora by providing a comparative framework that goes beyond the concept of migration as a geographical process and focuses on the concept of relational and emotional structures as the primary components of identity development. The dialogue between marriage and sisterhood broadens the current existing literature on the definition of the idea of diaspora, gender, and cultural negotiation by anticipating the voice of women as active agents, rather than passive carriers of tradition. Future research opportunities are also wide, since the same thematic issues can be discussed with regard to other Indian diasporic authors, such as the second and third generations, and in different regional, cultural, and transnational settings, such as the South Asian diaspora in Europe, Canada, and the Middle East. Additional analyses can also use the point of cross-betweenness of classes, sexuality, and generational tension to enhance the knowledge of how the outlines of women's diasporic identity are shifting in the globalized world.

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